



## **A Deadly Game**

*Joanne Griffiths*

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Kate Palmer, an undergraduate student, discovers that she is pregnant and makes the decision to drop out of university. However, on the evening before she returns home, her body is discovered in Aston park. She is the first victim of several murders that will rock the city of Birmingham.

DS James "Jim" Wardell, who has his own issues to contend with, is given the case.

When Eddie Carter, a popular talk show host on Birmingham's radio station, is contacted by someone claiming to be the killer, it is the start of a cat and mouse game between a deranged killer and the police.

After a second body is discovered the pressure mounts on the police to capture the person responsible.

Who is killing these women and why?

Can Jim apprehend the twisted killer before more innocent women are murdered?

## **A Deadly Game Details**

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Author : Joanne Griffiths

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# From Reader Review A Deadly Game for online ebook

## Chandra Claypool (wherethereadergrows) says

A debut novel, this book touches both in the realm of psychological and domestic thriller area. A serial killer is terrorizing young, petite, blonde women in the town of Aston. Known as the Aston Strangler, he becomes decisively more and more hostile as the killings go on - trying to find that thrill again. Taunting the police with letters while becoming increasingly frustrated as they continue to interview the wrong suspects, we see him grow more and more unable to control his anger. He takes out most of his frustration on his wife - his roller coaster of behavior confusing her more and more each day.

A solid debut. The author shows the typical pattern of a serial killer. The abrasiveness, increase in psychotic behavior while holding an every day, social job and the more chances they'll take to gain the power and control that the need now demands after each killing. The main stay, outside of these killings, is the relationship between the killer and his wife. He emotionally and physically abuses her and yet she tries to make this marriage work - not only for herself and her diminishing self esteem, but for their young daughter. Joanne does a fantastic job making the reader frustrated with the entire situation. Just leave him already! But, as with all relationships, easier said than done.

What I found most intriguing was the author's way of bringing in the victims. Providing the reader with a small background of each and every victim, we get to be involved in their lives - something not many writers do. I am the type of reader who needs more answers. I would've liked to have seen more fleshing out of the main characters - give me more background on the detective on the case... give me more on the killer and his wife so I know WHY she stays and how he became the deranged person that he is.

Fans of a lighter thriller without the twist and gut punches, will be fan of the easy read.

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## Pat says

Nothing to see here. A competent police procedural with a fairly predictable plot. Not a lot of drama as things progressed pretty much as expected. I didn't like Alison much, what planet was she on? Why would you stay with a husband who treated you like that? Ah well, on to the next book.

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## Abby Slater- Fairbrother says

A killer stalks the streets of Birmingham, attacking young women at their peril....

The prologue opens with young carefree student Kate Palmer, making the tough decision to leave university. Across Birmingham however we meet a woman also facing an uncertain and complex future, Alison. Alison, is married to a man only described only as 'he' throughout, he is a volatile, angry and controlling man. The scenes of domestic abuse narrated make for painful reading and fully display the control abusers exercise over their victims. With a young baby, Alison needs help drastically, but as we read her internal struggles we realise how tough it is indeed for victims to face the reality of their treatment and can relate to their belief it will get better. Will Alison find the courage she needs? Can she escape with her young baby?

Career copper, Jim and his police partner, Angela receive an urgent 999 call at midnight during their shift. Summoned to the scene at Aston Park, they find the dead body of a young woman, in what appears to be a sexually motivated crime, due to the display of the body. The victim is Id'ed as local student Kate Palmer and Kate's personal past is dragged out for everyone to see, secrets and all.....

The killer sends letters and items of the victims, to local radio host Eddie Carter. Eddie runs a Friday night talk show on the BTH FM station. The notes are violent in their wording and show the true level of depravity in the killer himself.

“She Deserved to die  
she was a whore  
I'm not done yet”

The police are worried this maybe an attempt at a hoax and the comparisons are drawn from the Yorkshire ripper case and the Hoax caller who confused the entire investigation for many months. When more and more young women's bodies turn up the media dub the killer the 'Aston strangler'. Is this Birmingham's answer to the Yorkshire ripper?

This novel covered a wide-variety of themes and I found that thoroughly engaging. The impact of the crimes on the surviving family, Press intrusion and police pressure are fully explored as the plot plays out. I loved the dynamic of 'double lives' but predicting which characters are leading double lives is never easy.

The novel has layers of depth, with a killer twist at the end! 4\*

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### **Mark Tilbury says**

What a brilliant debut novel! And what a narcissistic and selfish character the antagonist is. The police have their work cut out for them.

Women are being attacked and killed, and the police get pulled in different directions with false leads, leaving them struggling to solve the case. I enjoyed following their investigation and how the attacker thought he was always one step ahead of them.

Joanne has done a great job of keeping the identity of the attacker hidden. When I found out who it was, it was a surprise. This is an excellent crime/thriller novel from an author who seems to enjoy not only leading her characters, but also her readers, up blind alleys before revealing the truth.

I'll be looking out for more from Joanne.

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### **Rebecca Stobart says**

Firstly, thank you to Bloodhound books and Joanne Griffiths for my early copy of the novel, it's much appreciated and thank you to Sarah Hardy for allowing me to be a part of this blog tour. Now onto the review!

I can't believe this was a debut novel, I've read crime novels by seasoned authors before that weren't this good. It's not just the quality of writing, but the sophistication of the plot that kept me surprised till the end of the book. This review will be spoiler free so you'll just have to trust me that the whole thing is very clever.

The story is told from the POV of several characters, a trend in the crime fiction world, and one that I think keeps the reader thoroughly gripped in the story. We hear from the police, the family of the victims and more unusually, the killer. I think this was a really well done feature of the book, often we learn about the killer from an unsympathetic detective - I'm not saying I sympathise with serial killers, this person is horrible, but it was better learning about their personality from the source.

If anything I think Joanne Griffiths made her villain sound even more twisted by allowing them to introduce themselves, rather than letting the police piece together the character. He's living a double life and goes to work like a normal man, despite the awful things he's doing in his free time. As well as being a killer he's incredibly abusive and that's always something that really speaks to me in a novel. All the characters felt very real, which is just as important as the plot in a crime novel, if I don't believe the people are real, I can't believe the story could be real.

There isn't really a dull moment in this book, it's fast paced and the changes in perspective cover all areas of the story, in a way that keeps things exciting without being confusing or hard to follow. I'll look forward to seeing what comes next from Joanne Griffiths after this amazing debut.

I would recommend this book to fans of gritty crime and thriller novels. Seasoned crime readers won't be disappointed with the twist towards the end.

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## **Livia Sbarbaro says**

### **Clever , dark ...unputdownable ...**

When Kate Palmer is found murdered on a rainy night,D.S.Jim Wardell is put on a case that is going to stay with him ..Then another young woman is discovered by a vagrant .This case is becoming very dark..This is no ordinary killer ,he is one so twisted and confident that he will not be caught.When he is at home he abuses his wife in any which way he can, leaving her terrified confused and frightened.This man has his own agenda, his game that will be played out his way ..Then the letters begin to arrive, first at the radio station, then to the police.When a young innocent girl goes missing they all know they have a serial killer on their hands ..There is a dark twist ahead though ..just when this vile individual thinks he is the winner of the game ..walls begin to crumble all around ...Jim who has worked the case has a new partner just as they are becoming so close they have no idea that the evil they seek is watching and waiting...As the story reaches the climax there is a twist so dark ..darker than anything Jim could ever imagine..As this monster has one final act before the curtain closes..

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## **Sarah says**

I love how this story is told. It flicks between the killer himself, the victims families as well as the police. You really get a feel for what it's like from all sides. The parts to do with the victims families was

particularly emotional, I found myself filling up numerous times as what they were going through was just horrific.

Not only does the story focus on a serial killer but it deals with domestic abuse. We get to know the killer in his home life with his wife and daughter. The abuse that he dishes out to his wife does make for uncomfortable reading and my heart went out to her and what she was having to put up with.

The killer himself, I truly detested. I couldn't wait for the police to capture him. I wanted him to pay for the horrendous things he had done and it certainly made for a heart in your mouth read wondering how many more he was going to kill and if it was ever going to end.

I really liked Jim, he is just one of those likeable characters. I didn't pity him whatsoever having to let the victims poor families know about the death of a loved one. Through his character you could really tell how much this side of things can take it's toll. He is quite a gentle soul and he really cares about this case. I for one would love to see more of Jim as not sure if this is just a stand alone or the start of a new series.

A Deadly Game is a gripping read that will have you going through a whole array of emotions. I loved that the author had a couple of things up her sleeves which meant there were a couple of surprises in there that I wasn't expecting. A great debut novel and can't wait to read more by the author.

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### **Susan Hampson says**

One of the most horrific things that disturbed me about the killings in this book was how simple it was to end someone's life. Yes there had to be brutal force and as I had witnessed this man in his secret role of abuser and wife beater at home, I knew how rage fuelled his strength, but I think it was more disbelief from his victims that made the conclusion a certainty. By the time they realised what was happening it was too late because this sort of thing always happened to someone else.

This is a pretty wicked book from debut author Joanne Griffiths as she took me into the minds of all the people involved in these murders. This made the story very intense and somehow took it all to a very personal and emotional level for me as it made me very involved in the story myself from every aspect. I was angry too how a label of how someone lived for a short time would be the thing that they would be remembered by not the person they were. Very sad.

I took to DS Jim Wardell a Yorkshire man now working in Aston Birmingham where all the murders were to take place and rookie Angela Watkins that had transferred into the plain clothes side of policing from uniform. They made a good match as a working team. They definitely had their work cut out on this case as the body count was steadily rising and the murderer taunted them.

Joanne Griffiths delivers to her readers a heart breaking story that is very easy to connect with and she does this with such simplicity, no completed plot to keep up with or an abundance of characters where it is easy to get lost. She is a very gutsy writer that a couple of times totally threw me in shocking ways that just left me mouth open and floored. Absolutely perfect. One thing is for sure I will be looking out her next book. She has a refreshing style that I really loved reading.

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### **Misfits farm says**

Girls are going missing in Aston, Birmingham. A man is playing a game with the police who have no leads

as to who or why. A woman is badly treated by her husband and fears the outcome when she again falls pregnant. This is a well written book albeit with a fairly simplistic straightforward plot. Not always a bad thing, a nice easy detective read that you can digest without having to engage the grey matter too much. For me I like a little more of the background of the detectives to give them depth and a persona outside of the detective role. A light enjoyable read.

I voluntarily chose to read this ARC and all opinions in this review are my own and completely unbiased.

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## **Nicki Southwell says**

I enjoyed this book from start to finish.

A young girl who is struggling to make her way in the world drops out of university to peruse an alternative way to earn money. Kate Palmer is the first body to be found.

Jim Wardell (a DS) is on the case with Angie (DC Watkins).

Eddie Carter, the talk show host, receives a message from the killer and herein starts a game of catch me. When a second body is found, the pressure is on for the police to step and find the killer. Once again, Eddie Carter is contacted.

Who is responsible for these women's death?

Set in Birmingham this book switches between the victim, their family and the police. The cat and mouse game is well described and gripping. The level of abuse sustained by the killer's wife and daughter is eye opening. His life is also described which is interesting.

The climax is exciting.

The characters are great and I look forward to reading more by Joanne Griffiths. An author to watch.

I chose to read this book and all opinions in this review are all my own and completely unbiased. My thanks to Bloodhound Books for this opportunity.

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## **Diane Hogg says**

Book Description:

Kate Palmer, an undergraduate student, discovers that she is pregnant and makes the decision to drop out of university. However, on the evening before she returns home, her body is discovered in Aston park. She is the first victim of several murders that will rock the city of Birmingham.

Detective Sergeant James “Jim” Wardell, who has his own issues to contend with, is given the case.

When Eddie Carter, a popular talk show host on Birmingham’s Radio Station, is contacted by someone

claiming to be the killer, it is the start of a cat and mouse game between a deranged killer and the police. After a second body is discovered the pressure mounts on the police to capture the man responsible.

Who is killing these women and why?

Can Jim capture the twisted killer before more innocent women are murdered?

## My Review

A Deadly Game, what a debut from Joanne Griffiths, an amazing psychological thriller with bite.

Women are being killed around Aston, Birmingham, a serial killer playing games. A game of cat and mouse, the police have no evidence, no DNA. The killer taunts the police seemingly wanting to be caught whilst enjoying the pleasure from his kills.

In another part of town a young woman suffers at the hands of her husband, a victim of domestic abuse, Alison has a young baby, whom she will do anything to protect. The narrative of the scenes of domestic abuse are hard-hitting and is tense reading, it shows how volatile an abuser can be and the pain a victim goes through. Even though it was hard reading about domestic abuse it was essential to the plotline. As time passes Alison becomes pregnant again and has to find a way to leave her abusive relationship. Will it be possible, can she survive?

Detective Sergeant James "Jim" Wardell has been handed the case despite his own problematic life, Jim is a sensitive and determined character who wants nothing more than to stop the serial killer.

The killer is a not a likeable character, Joanne has painted a picture of him which I think we would gladly erase if we could, he is violent, unrepentant and sadistic, my feelings towards him are pure unadulterated hatred. I wanted him found, arrested and removed from society as not harm anyone else.

While reading A Deadly Game, I felt part of the story, included in the journey, I even felt as though I had climbed inside the head of the killer and was watching through his eyes at his heinous acts. I thoroughly enjoyed reading Joanne Griffiths debut book and I look forward to following Joanne through any more she writes.

Thank you to Bloodhound Books and Joanne Griffiths for the Advance Readers Copy in return for an honest review. Also thank you to Sarah Hardy for allowing me the opportunity to try a Blog tour.

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## Jessica Bronder says

Kate Palmer is a college kid that becomes pregnant. She decides to drop out and return home to her parents but never makes it. Instead her body is discovered in a park. She is to become the first of several victims to a serial killer that enjoys his game of cat and mouse with Detective Jim Wardell and the police.

This story grabs you from the start and sucks you in. This story is told from several perspectives. You have the killer that is horribly abusive to his wife. He has a new game and loves playing it with the girls. He really enjoys taunting the police too. He is someone that you will wait breathlessly for his demise.



You see the heartbreak the families go through with the deaths of the girls. There were several parts that I was in tears for them. I don't wish the loss of a loved one like this on any family. But then you have Jim Wardell. He is a great detective and wants to stop the killer. He truly cares for the families and hates having to be the one to bring this darkness upon them.

This is an edge of your seat thriller that will have you cheering for the police and wanting the serial killers to get his own. This is the first book of Joanna Griffiths that I have read and I was completely blown away. She is an amazing author and I can't wait to see what she is going to come up with next.

I received A Deadly Game from Bloodhound Books for free. This has had no influence on my review.

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## **Laura Turner says**

All my reviews can be found on my blog: <https://pageturnersnook.wordpress.com>

What a great debut novel!!! This has got to be up there with some of the best authors. This does not read like a debut novel at all. It's written with so much experience and the storyline is truly magnetic!

Unlike other crime novels, A Deadly Game introduced me to the serial killer straight away, which I think made me more enthralled to read on – I was gripped. Knowing who was committing the devastating crimes and learning about their background and personality had me biting my nails. Believe me when I say that they're a nasty piece of work – abuse plays a major part in this novel. Joanne Griffiths has portrayed the killer so well, getting into their mind to truly give the reader a mind blowing experience of what 'sick' and 'twisted' really is.

The characterisation and character building throughout the entire novel is second to none. It is really laid on thick to the point you actually believe in the story. It's almost like the story is a feature in the local news (god forbid it is not) and with each chapter told from the perspective of different characters; the serial killer, the serial killer's wife, police, the victims and the victims families – one huge picture emerges that I can only describe as shivering material. As a reader I felt I got to know the story from all sides, however I must admit the hell the families went through is heartbreaking. A Deadly Game is written with so much depth, I honestly felt I was there with them.

As mentioned above, this is a cracking debut novel and if this is the standard of the debut from Joanne Griffiths, then by gum, us readers are in for some thrill rides when more novels emerge from her den.

The pace of A Deadly Game is fast, very fast, and it's one of those novels that keeps you dangling on the edge until the very last minute. At one point, real close towards the end of the novel, I wasn't so sure there would be a conclusion, then it HIT and a conclusion it sure was. I guess Joanne Griffiths gets an almighty kick out of leaving us readers in heavy suspense!

Overall, a good 5\* rating for me!

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## **Eva says**

Kate Palmer's life isn't exactly going the way she meant it to. She decides to drop out of university and head back home to her parents with her tail between her legs. But then she's murdered. And she won't be the last victim as the killer hasn't only found something that gives him great pleasure but he's also quite enjoying taunting the police and playing a game with them.

I thoroughly enjoyed the time the author took to create background stories for each of the victims. It just makes you care that little bit more when they're murdered. Harsh but you know it's true! Devoting chapters about the effects on the families of the victims added another extra layer.

The killer is one sick and twisted individual. Actually, he's a whole bunch of horrible words I can't print for fear of setting off some kind of censor alarm. You'll have to find out for yourself but Joanne Griffiths does a great job getting into his mind and letting the reader know how cruel he can be.

This is a well paced crime fiction novel with a twist I didn't see coming and since then, I've been wondering if I missed a clue somewhere. There may be one or two things I have a few misgivings about and could have done without (which I can't tell you about because it would give away too much about the plot) but all in all, this was an enjoyable read.

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## **Alison says**

What a cracking book! I'm really into my crime stories at the moment so there is always a danger that they become too similar and lose the 'wow' appeal, no such worries with A Deadly Game. This gripped me from the start, there is so much realism to the events that occur, it is scarily believable.

There is a madman on the loose, terrorising his victims, rape that eventually becomes murder. The young women involved are all incredibly normal just going about their daily business .. the author takes us into the families, the helplessness of the victim, the utter devastation felt by the relatives as the hunt begins for a missing person, which rapidly turns into a murder enquiry.

I liked the down to earth nature of DS Jim Wardell he puts his soul into his job and takes the role incredibly seriously, what more can he do to catch this guy? He works closely with DC Angie Watkins and they make an excellent investigative team, balancing subtlety and questions. They are having a 'relationship' which is so sweetly described it brings a gentler side to the story.

Joanne Griffiths managed to keep me reading from beginning to end without taking much of a break! There is so much action, as the pieces fit together and the frustrating chase for the police to uncover the killer before more bodies are added to the list makes the conclusion very dramatic.

This is so refreshing to read, it made a nice addition actually knowing who the killer is and taking a journey into his mindset. A perfect balance of tension, suspense amid a normal community.

I would readily recommend A Deadly Game and can't wait to see what Joanne comes up with next, a debut author to keep an eye on.

Thanks to the author and Bloodhound Books for the opportunity to read and review this which I did voluntarily.

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